

# Hope still remains for keeping St. Georges Bridge standing

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Even though the United States Army Corps of Engineers still plans to shut down the St. Georges Bridge, some locals haven't given up the fight to keep it open.

Those battling for the bridge hoped that getting it put on the national list of historic places would buy some time, but last month the list was printed and the bridge wasn't on it.

Even so, there are still several options open to those who want to see the bridge remain standing,

Rep. Dick Cathcart (R-Boyd's Corner) said.

Cathcart said the Environmental Protection Agency's study of the bridge's impact on the area surrounding the structure still needs to be completed.

"And if that impact study shows that the town of St. Georges needs to keep that bridge, the Army Corps is going to be hard-pressed to find a way to take it down," he said.

This environmental impact study, due to be released in the fall, could show a necessity for the bridge to remain open to handle impending traffic due to growth in the south-

ern New Castle County area.

"It would be crazy for them (the Army Corps) to shut down this bridge when it will be a viable option for them to use when the State Route 1 Bridge reaches capacity," said Erik Dressler, resident of North St. Georges.

Cathcart said he is tired of waiting for the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to come up with a way to save the bridge.

He said DelDOT Secretary Anne Canby has promised to find a useful strategy to take back to the federal government to seek

funds for the bridge.

"The bridge has been re-engineered to cost \$35 million. If we get the \$7 million from the private investors and \$20 million from the Army Corps, she will only be asking for \$10 million from the government," Cathcart said.

The \$20 million amount from the Army Corps is what it would cost to tear down the bridge. Instead, Cathcart is hoping they will donate that amount to rehabilitate the aging structure, which has been standing since 1942.

But at this point, Cathcart said he hasn't heard anything from Canby.

"The state was even given the opportunity to comment on the necessity of the bridge for the EPA's environmental impact study, but they refused to make comments until after the study is completed," Cathcart said.

"I am deeply disturbed that the state didn't make the comments beforehand when it could have made a difference. I really think the state could be moving a little faster on this," he added.

He said if he doesn't hear anything new from DelDOT in the next month, he is going to begin drafting legislation to be introduced during the next legislative session that will pay for the entire bridge rehabilitation.

"Unless we can get something done in Washington, I will take care of it. If that means Delaware will be in the bridge business, so be it," he said, adding he believes residents and Hardcore Composites Company have been overly patient.

Hardcore is the composites company that would be refurbishing the bridge using new fiberglass technology. This technology is seen as making the bridge stronger than steel and longer lasting.

"I know they are chomping at the bit to get going on this project," he said.